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# The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy and Developmental Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa, Islam in Africa

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# The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy and Developmental Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa

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# Question

- How has the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) instrumentalized development to further its geopolitical, economic, and ideological interests in Sub-Saharan Africa?

# Case Study

- Construction Jihad (CJ) (1979-2001)
  - Rural development organization
  - Helped the IRI consolidate power against domestic and foreign opponents (1979-1983)
    - Improved rural infrastructure and services
    - Spread revolutionary and Islamist values
    - Provided logistical support during Iran-Iraq War
  - Became ministry and began overseas operations in 1984-1985
  - Merged with Ministry of Agriculture to form Ministry of Agricultural Jihad (MAJ) in 2001

# Scholarly Contribution

- Temporality: De-Radicalization of IRI's Foreign Policy in Africa and Beyond (1984-2005)
- Geography: IRI's Foreign Policy in Non-Muslim and Sunni-Majority Africa vs. Shiite World
- Tactics: Development as Soft Power Mechanism vs. Covert, Military Assistance and Ideological Propagation

# Methods

- Interviews with IRI/ CJ Officials and Development Experts in Iran and Africa
- Archival Research at the IRI's Parliamentary Library and National Library & Archives and the MAJ's Library and Research Center

# Outline

- Theoretical Framework: Complex Realism
- De-Radicalization (1984-2005)
- CJ in Africa (1985-1991)
- Re-Radicalization (2005-2013)
- MAJ in Africa (2007-2009)
- Conclusion

# Theory: Complex Realism

- Ehteshami & Hinnebusch
- Dependent Variable: Foreign Policymaking & Outcomes
- Three Independent, Structural Variables:
  - Anarchic and Dynamic, Regional & Int'l System
  - Domestic Politics: State Formation, Institutional Configuration, Decision-Making, Power Concentration, Intra-Elite Conflict (vs. Agency)
  - Realist or Material and Constructivist or Ideological Objectives



# Radicalization (1980-1984)

- International: Bipolar World/ Cold War
- Regional: Iranian Revolution, American Hostage Crisis, Iran-Iraq War & Radical Regimes in Africa
- Domestic: Radical Government in Iran
  - Material: Financial and Military Support to National Liberation Movements in Africa
  - Ideological: Revolution & Anti-Imperialism

# De-Radicalization - Conservatism (1984-1988)

- International: Bipolar World/ Cold War
- Regional: Iran-Iraq War, International Sanctions & Radical Regimes in Africa
- Domestic: Conservative Government in Iran
  - Material: Mitigate Isolation and Establish Diplomatic & Commercial Relations with Africa
  - Ideological: Shiite Islam & Guardianship of the Jurist (*velayat-e faqih*)

# De-Radicalization - Pragmatism (1989-2005)

- International: Unipolar World/ Post-Cold War
- Regional: Gulf Wars in Middle East & Fragile Democratization in Africa
- Domestic: Moderate & Reformist Governments in Iran
  - Material: Strengthen Diplomatic & Commercial Relations with Africa
  - Ideological: Minimize Ideological Propagation & Religious Proselytization

# CJ in Africa (1985-1991)

- Formalized, Routinized & Professionalized
- Tanzania (1987) & Ghana (1989)
  - Expanded Mechanized Agriculture, Improved Farming, and Increased Production of Strategic Crops, Livestock, and Fish
  - Distributed Medication, Administered Vaccinations, and Provided Vocational Training
  - Offered Loans, Supplied Irrigation and Drinking Water, Supported Rural Industry, and Constructed Roads, Dams, Hospitals, and Health Clinics

# CJ in Africa (1985-1991)

- Sudan & Sierra Leone (1991)
  - Agricultural Mechanization and Extension
  - Road Construction
  - Medication and Hygiene

# Source: CJ's Office of Stats & Info

Project Title		Country and Year of Establishment							Total
		Tanzania	Ghana	Lebanon	Sudan	Sierra Leone	Albania		
		1987	1989	1989	1991	1991	1993		
	<b>Rural Construction</b>								
Agricultural Mechanization Services	Hectares	9,450	5,500	100	1,000	200	850	17,100	
Livestock Extension	Families	450	55	--	--	--	--	505	
Agricultural Extension	Hectares	4,250	1,850	--	6,000	50	300	12,450	
Rural Industry	Cases	12	28	--	--	--	--	40	
Loans	Cases	258	198	--	--	--	--	456	
Miscellaneous Services	Cases	25	20	10	20	5	4	84	
	<b>Construction</b>								
Road Construction, Repair, & Maintenance	Kilometers	250	25	--	42	--	--	317	
Building Construction & Reconstruction	Units	28	24	25	2	6	4	89	
Water & Irrigation Facilities Construction	Cases	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	
Hospital & Clinic Reconstruction	Units	3	2	3	1	2	2	13	
Hospital & Clinic Equipment	Units	3	2	--	1	2	2	10	
Medical Service Provision	People	8,500	3,500	--	125,500	75,200	250,000	462,700	
	<b>Hygiene</b>								
Hygiene	People	160	65	--	100	10	200	535	
Agriculture	Families	1,250	830	--	257	55	125	2,517	
Technical & Professional	People	345	255	--	525	15	25	1,165	
	<b>Education/ Training</b>								
Agriculture	Cases	10	8	2	5	3	4	32	
Social	Cases	5	5	--	2	2	2	16	
Cultural	Cases	5	5	2	2	2	4	20	
Economic	Cases	13	10	2	3	3	4	35	
	<b>Project Surveys</b>								
By Authorities & Officials	People	552	384	120	415	54	77	1,602	

# Re-Radicalization (2005-2013)

- International: Unipolar World/ Post-Cold War
- Regional: Iran Nuclear Crisis & Int'l Sanctions
- Domestic: Hardliner Government
  - Material: Intensify Diplomatic & Commercial Relations with Africa
  - Ideological: Radical Anti-Imperialism & Conservative Religious-Political Doctrine

# MAJ in Africa (2007-2009)

- Formalized, Routinized & Professionalized
- Expanded Presence in Africa
- Economics
  - Assistance w/ Agriculture & Fisheries
  - Vocational Training
  - Bilateral Investment & Trade Agreements
  - Business Contracts & Export Markets



# MAJ in Africa (2007-2009)

- Geopolitics
  - Uranium Deposits
  - Access to Strategic Routes along Red Sea
  - Conflict Mediation
  - Multilateral Organizations
  - UN/ IAEA Votes
- Limitations
  - Geostrategic Priorities
  - Resource Allocations

# Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Opportunities
  - Radical Regimes (1960s-1990s)
  - Sizeable Agrarian Economies
  - Widespread Rural Poverty
  - Formidable Developmental Challenges

# Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Material & Ideological Gains:
  - Diplomatic Recognition & Regional Clout
    - Conflict Mediation & Multilateral Organizations
  - Business Contracts & Export Markets
  - Strategic Routes along Red Sea (Force Projection)
  - UN Votes for Human Rights Record

# Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Constraints:
  - Inauspicious Demographics
  - Foreign Competition

# Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Material & Ideological Setbacks:
  - Temporary Cessation of Diplomatic Ties
    - Covert, Military Assistance & Ideological Propagation
  - UN/ IAEA Votes against Nuclear Program
  - Minimal Conversions